

The Real Presence and Our Response

Fessahaye Mebrahtu

The 2nd Sunday after Pentecost is celebrated as the feast of “The Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ.” The real presence of Christ in the Eucharist is central to our Catholic faith. Every so often the Church reminds us to touch base with such fundamental identity of our faith. For example, Eucharistic congresses remind us of and invite us to renew our faith in the real presence. Eucharistic Adoration has been in resurgence among young adults, who find it a valuable spirituality renewing their faith. This being good and beneficial in our spiritual growth, piety on its own is not sufficient to truly live our faith. The presence of God in our brothers and sisters cannot be overlooked while practicing traditional devotions. In the real presence of the Lord, we cannot escape the question asking, “Where is your brother?”

The Gospel reading today partly answers such question. The crowd hungry for Jesus’ words needed physical sustenance. Aware of this, the disciples asked Jesus to dismiss them so that they can buy food from the surrounding areas, acknowledging where they were was in no man’s land. Jesus reminds his disciples that they are their “brothers and sisters’ keepers” when he said, “Give them some food yourselves.” “Five loaves and two fish” all they have was enough to feed the crowd. The presence of the Lord in their midst was enough to cause such a miracle.

Teaching about the real presence of body and blood of Christ in the Eucharist, St. Paul, who was converted many years after the death and resurrection of Jesus, he wrote, “I received from the Lord what I also handed on to you... For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the death of the Lord until he comes.” The Church teaches us that the Eucharistic celebration is the summit and the source of our Catholic identity.

In the first reading, Melchizedek, king of Salem foreshadowing the priesthood institute by Jesus on his Apostles to make the “real presence” concrete celebrating the Eucharist using bread and wine. The ordained priests are to feed the flock with Body and Blood of Christ as often as possible. In our Catholic practice, Sunday becomes the weekly Easter, the 8th Day, the Day of Blessing (Domenica), the First Day, etc. when we gather to celebrate the real presence in the Eucharist. We are also called the “Eucharist People,” a real presence of Christ to others, a source of blessing and hope in the midst of their chaotic life situation and despair. Milwaukee and many urban communities, under siege by vicious cycle of violence, desperately need the real presence of Christ in their midst, both in the Eucharist and in us the eucharistic people.